

CHAPTER 1

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for State Need Grant (SNG) consideration, the student must:

- Demonstrate financial need.
- Meet either an established income cutoff, the definition of disadvantaged or former foster care youth.
- Be a resident of the state of Washington.
- Be an undergraduate.
- Be enrolled at least half-time.
- Be enrolled in an eligible program.
- Submit an approved Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

To be eligible for SNG consideration, the student must NOT:

- Be in an unsatisfactory progress-denied condition.
- Owe a repayment to the SNG or any other student aid program.
- Pursue a second Associate degree with assistance of SNG unless five years have elapsed since the first Associate degree.
- Have exceeded either of these limits:
 - Five years of SNG term usage.
 - 125% of the published length of his or her program.
- Be pursuing a degree in theology.

Financial Need

The student must demonstrate *financial need* as calculated by the institution, using the Federal Methodology (FM) formula. The student's SNG award, in combination with other forms of aid, may not exceed the calculated need.

Income Cutoff

The student must have a family income below a specified *income cutoff*, be disadvantaged, or be a former foster care youth. The cutoff is a percentage of the state's median family income (MFI) and is adjusted according to family size. For

2006-2007, the income cutoff is 65 percent of the state's MFI. The income cutoff points are described in the chapter on "Calculating the Award."

Disadvantaged Student

A *disadvantaged* student is a student who has participated in an approved early awareness program such as GEAR-UP or TRIO. The student must also demonstrate financial need.

Former Foster Youth

A *former foster youth* is defined as someone at least eighteen years of age, but no more than twenty-four years of age, who was a dependent of the Department of Social and Health Services at the time he or she turned eighteen. The student must also demonstrate financial need.

Resident for SNG Purposes

Resident means being a resident of the state of Washington as defined in RCW 28B.15.012 (2) (a) through (d) and in HECB-adopted rules pertaining to residency. (The statutory reference and the complete residency rules are in the "Rules" section of this manual).

Resident for Tuition, but not for SNG

NOTE: Since 1994, the Legislature has classified certain groups as residents for tuition and fee purposes at public institutions. However, these groups are not eligible for the SNG. They are:

1. "*Undocumented Residents*": The 2003 Legislature provided a means for certain students to become eligible for the payment of resident tuition and fees without regard to U.S. Citizenship. See statutes Chapter RCW 28B.15.012 (2) (e).
2. "*American Indians*" from Washington whose permanent residence is in Oregon, Idaho, or Montana.
3. "*Military personnel*", their spouse and dependents, or National Guard".

To be eligible for SNG consideration, members of these groups must prove they have established a domicile in Washington state according to RCW 28B.15.012 (2) (a) through (d), as would any student petitioning for residency.

Conflicting Information

Institutions are required to resolve any conflicting information regarding residency status between the financial aid office,

admissions and registration, and any internal documents received. The HECB will periodically compare residency-related data reported on the FAFSA (such as address, state of legal residence, driver's license state) to request schools confirm eligibility or resolve conflicting information.

Undergraduate Student

An *undergraduate student* is a student who has not received a first baccalaureate or professional degree.

Enrolled at Least Halftime

An *enrolled at least halftime* is being enrolled or accepted for enrollment as at least a halftime undergraduate student at a participating postsecondary institution for six credits per quarter or semester, or twelve clock hours per week (or 150 clock hours per term).

Eligible Program

An *eligible program* is a program at a location approved by the U. S. Department of Education for participation in the Title IV financial aid programs.

1. The student at a public or private nonprofit institution must be enrolled in an educational program that is or does one of the following:
 - a) Leads to a baccalaureate, associate, or undergraduate professional degree.
 - b) Is at least a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward a baccalaureate degree.
 - c) Is at least a one-year training program leading to a certificate or degree and prepares the student for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.
2. The student at a postsecondary vocational, technical, or proprietary institution must be enrolled in a program of at least 600 clock hours, 16 semester or 24 quarter credit hours leading to a certificate or degree which prepares the student for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.

Correspondence and Distance Education

No more than one-half of the student's course load per term may be through correspondence courses. There are no special rules prohibiting the receipt of SNG by eligible students enrolled in electronically delivered distance education coursework offered by eligible institutions.

*Study Abroad
Programs*

“Study abroad” students are eligible to be considered for SNG if one of the following is applicable:

1. They are enrolled at an institution for a Study Abroad program and
2. The institution has agreed to administer the financial aid in conjunction with another institution running the Study Abroad program.

Approved Application

Approved application means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, as approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

No Application Fee

No student shall be required to pay a fee to apply for a SNG. This does not prevent a student from paying an application fee to be considered for institutional assistance or for private source scholarships.

**Unsatisfactory
Progress-Denied**

Unsatisfactory progress means that in a previous term, the student failed to complete at least one-half (50 percent) of the minimum number of credits or clock hours for which the SNG was received and has not yet earned reinstatement. *Denied* may also refer to a student's status when the student has met or exceeded the institution's maximum timeframe or progress. See the “Satisfactory Academic Progress” chapter for more information.

Refund/Repayment

All students must certify that they do not owe a refund and are not in repayment for any state or federal student financial aid programs including the SNG, Educational Opportunity Grant, Pell Grant, or Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. Further, the student may not be in default on a loan made, insured, or guaranteed under the Perkins, National Direct, or Federal Family Education Loan program or made through a state conditional loan program.

2nd Associate Degree

If the student is pursuing a second associate degree, five years must have elapsed since attaining the first associate degree. For this provision to apply, the student must have received more than three quarters or two semesters of SNG before the first degree was awarded. The archive check report has been updated to include student receipt of associate degrees. The archive is updated throughout the year and is available at the secure,

password-protected portion of the HECB Website at:
<https://fortress.wa.gov/hecb/secure/login.asp> . A student may
earn two associates degree concurrently.

**Five Years
Eligibility**

The student may receive the grant for a maximum of five years.
Five years means ten semesters, fifteen quarters, or the
equivalent combination of the two at a full-time rate of
enrollment.

**125% of Program
Limit**

The SNG may not be awarded to a student who has exceeded 125
percent of the published length of his or her program. Financial
Aid Administrators (FAAs) shall apply the same rules to the 125
percent limit as are used for the similar federal requirements for
maximum program length.

FAAs may exercise professional judgment to individual student
situations when applying the 125 percent rule. These exceptions
shall generally follow the flexibility granted to the FAA in
applying the federal 150 percent limitation. While the actual 125
percent limit cannot be changed, other circumstances can be
recognized, as with the federal limitations. For example, the
school may do one of the following:

1. Choose the unit of measure that constitutes the published
length of time.
2. Exclude remedial coursework up to 30 semester hours or 45
quarter hours.
3. Exclude English as a Second Language course work.
4. Re-start the timeframe after a change of program.
5. Consider other exceptional circumstances as documented by
the student.

As in all use of professional judgment, the FAA shall apply it
judiciously, on a case-by-case basis, and document the reasons
for the exception in the student's file.

Theology Degree

A state statute applicable to all financial aid programs, addresses
the theology matter. RCW 28B.10.814 reads, "No aid shall be
awarded to any student who is pursuing a degree in theology."
The decision as to what majors fall under the heading "theology"
is left to individual institutions, which are in the best position to
determine the course content of their own major courses of study.

The individual institutions must make this determination in light of the Washington State Constitution, which provides in Article 1 § 11 that “no public money or property shall be appropriated for or applied to any religious worship, exercise or instruction.”

ELIGIBILITY MONITORING

The institution is required to verify student eligibility using the HECB Archive report; monitor SAP status; report fraudulent recipients, and apply consistent institutional policies as for federal aid programs unless in conflict with state program guidelines.

HECB Archive Report

The *archive check* is a tool to assist schools in determining whether or not a student:

1. has exhausted his or her five years of SNG eligibility;
2. owes a repayment on a previously disbursed SNG award; or,
3. has received a prior associate degree within the past five years and prior to that degree received more than two semesters or three quarters of SNG. It will also show the student’s next eligible year and term.

In addition, the report lists all students who are within two years (five quarters) of meeting the program maximum, and lists the quarters of eligibility remaining (QER).

It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that all students who receive a SNG have been checked against the final archive file on these three conditions.

The finalized archive report will be available from the HECB in late August. It will contain the updated information on the prior year's SNG recipient exceptions. The file is posted to the secure, password-protected portion of the HECB Website at:
<https://fortress.wa.gov/hecb/secure/login.asp>.

In the period of time before the HECB issues the final archive report, the institution is to use the most recent report available on the Website as a basis for offering awards to students to minimize the need for late repackaging. Current-year archive reports are updated to reflect:

- Non-public institution payments.
- Updated repayment receivables information.
- Quarterly associate degree updates.

NOTE: Check the archive before submitting any payment request.

The downloadable archive record layout is located at the end of the chapters on public and private payments.

SAP

Institutions are responsible for monitoring and responding to changes in student eligibility that affect the SNG award. The Satisfactory Progress Chapter discusses procedures for changes in student status that occur after receipt of an award.

Fraudulent Information

Any student who obtains a SNG by means of a willfully false statement or failure to reveal any material fact, condition, or circumstance affecting eligibility will be subject to applicable civil and criminal penalties.

Bachelors Degree Equivalent

In order to be consistent with institutional policy for the administration of its other financial aid programs, an institution may withhold payment of a SNG to a student who has earned sufficient credits for, but has not earned, a first baccalaureate or professional degree.

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* Otherwise eligible students enrolled at participating less than halftime pilot project institutions may receive SNG if enrolled in 4 or 5 credits and as non-matriculated students.